

# Tribulations? Take heart!

Easter 6

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John 16:23-33

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Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

While I've been here, I've heard a particular account a few times. There was a Sunday School teacher a while back who had said not to rush into friendships but to wait and see where one is coming from first. Whether this is the method you use in making friends, you may apply it in any number of other situations: a new pastor, a new teacher, a new neighbor, a new coworker—the list can go on and on.

The book of Proverbs chimes in on finding good friends. It is true that we are to love everyone, but there are advantages to being with those who are wise in Christ. Proverbs 18:24 says, “A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” Who else would that be than our Lord Christ Jesus? And at the same time, those who have been called to faith in Christ are in Christ's wisdom. So we also hear Proverbs 13:20: “Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.” Again, the author is not referring to worldly wisdom, but the wisdom found in Jesus.

We know that Jesus is the source of our wisdom now, but there was a time when even His disciples regarded Him as a new person, one who needed to be watched to see where He was coming from, as your previous Sunday School teacher recommended.

In our Gospel text, Jesus reminds the disciples of this time of watching, but then also reveals to them that their relationship with not only Him, but also with the Father, had been updated to the personal level. This morning, we'll explore how Jesus' disciples came to know Him and how not only their relationship with God and Jesus has been updated, but also ours.

## Verse 1

Our Gospel text begins in the midst of a conversation Jesus was having with His disciples. In the middle of Jesus' turn at speaking, our text begins with the following words: “In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.”

Knowing full well that His disciples had been watching to see what He would do from the beginning, Jesus spoke to their thoughts. He told them that the time was coming when they would rejoice and would no longer question Him. That time would be after His death and resurrection. A few verses later, Jesus' disciples would tell Him, “Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God.” Yet Jesus responds, “Do you now believe?”

How many signs had the disciples witnessed Jesus performing? From His changing the water into wine to raising Lazarus from the dead, they had seen the Old Testament prophecies being fulfilled—yet they still questioned. Then, when Jesus began to speak plainly to them in this text, they claimed to know who He was, but Jesus knew better. They had faith, but more was to come. His crucifixion was to come; His resurrection was to come; and the Holy Spirit was to come upon them at Pentecost that they would be able to believe full-heartedly who Jesus was as the Son of God. Yet even when these things would occur, the disciples would have trials and tribulations.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, you also are witnesses of Jesus' death and resurrection. You also have received His Holy Spirit. But do you still question the work of Jesus in your life? Do you trust that God can

bring good out of any situation, no matter what it is? Or do you trust yourself and withhold from trusting Jesus fully? The only way to trust Jesus fully is to go along with Him even when you think you know better. After all, doesn't He tell us that "for those who love God all things work together for good"? Yes, He tells us that through Paul in Romans chapter eight.

### Verse 2

So Jesus spoke about His upcoming death and resurrection and the day to come after it when the disciples would know Him and trust in Him fully. Since we live after His resurrection and after Pentecost, we do know Him fully—or at least, as fully as He lets us. God hasn't told us everything about Himself; but enough that we know that He loves us because He sent His Son to die for us and He took away our sin. With that in mind, Jesus tells His disciples, and us, "Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."

Apparently up to this point, the disciples had perhaps asked favors of Jesus and prayed to the Father, but they had not prayed to the Father in Jesus' name. Jesus, then, tells them to pray in His name, that they might receive that for which they asked so that their joy might be full.

Those same instructions apply to us; but does that mean that we can pray for anything and expect to get it? No, of course not. God will only grant those things which will turn our sorrows in our tribulations into joy as only He knows how, and when.

What a gift that is! To be able to speak to God the Father Himself! "In that day," Jesus said, "you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God." Though we may not be allowed to see God in our present state and live, we can speak directly to Him. We do not have to pray to Jesus so that He will then pray to God the Father, no, we can pray to God the Father Himself, and because we have been given faith to believe in Jesus, we can know that the Father hears us and wants to grant us those things which will give us true joys.

### Verse 3

Yet once Jesus has revealed that His disciples can approach God as their Heavenly Father, Jesus told them again that He was going to die. He said to them, "I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father."

Here again we may be tempted to answer as the disciples did: "Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; that is why we believe that you came from God." The disciples were answering Jesus confidently, to be sure, but Jesus knew what was to happen. He knew that they were having a relatively easy time at that point and that trials and tribulations were to come. That's what He tells them after their response: "Do you now believe? Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone."

Jesus knew trials would come to His disciples in the form of His going to the cross. He already knew that they would abandon Him. And He also knew that more trials would come following His death, resurrection, and ascension. That is why He gives them this word of hope: "I am not alone, for the Father is with me. I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulations. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

While the disciples would be scattered at Jesus' death, once He had ascended and they had received the promised Holy Spirit, they were faithful even to death—and for most if not all of them, their death would be that of martyrs, being killed for the faith. They were able to believe Jesus and trust Him because of the Holy Spirit put upon them at Pentecost and because of these words.

You, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, have received the same Holy Spirit and the same words of Gospel. You can call on your Heavenly Father in any and every time, both those of things going well or easy and those times which are challenging or trying or of tribulation. You know in faith that Your Heavenly Father will hear you and will work all things together for your good because you, through His Holy Spirit, believe in the One He sent: His Son Jesus Christ, crucified and risen for the forgiveness of your sins and for your life everlasting. In Jesus' Name. Amen.